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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BANGKOK 005252

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FOR PRM/A TRUSCH AND S/CT TKUSCHNER

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TAGS: PREF BM PTER

SUBJECT: INFORMATION ON KAREN NI NATIONAL PROGRESSIVE PARTY

REF: A. RANGOON 1184

1B. STATE 130770

1C. CHIANG MAI 139

Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR SUSAN SUTTON, REASON 1.4 (B,D)

11. (U) This message responds to ref b request for reporting about the Karen Ni National Progressive Party (KNPP). It provides information about the KNPP's activities in refugee camps in Thailand.

12. (C) Detailed, concrete information about the KNPP's activities in the two refugee camps in Thailand where persons of the Karen Ni ethnic group make up the majority of the population is difficult to obtain. We are not aware of any systematic studies of this subject. Reports about such activities are anecdotal and impressionistic. We note Ref c statement that the Burmese government engages in misinformation campaigns against ethnic organizations. The information in this message comes from UNHCR representatives and the deputy head of the Thai-Burma Border Consortium, the NGO that provides the largest amount of assistance in the Karen Ni camps. The two Karen Ni camps, near Mae Hong Song City in northern Thailand, are named Site 1/Ban Kwai Nai Soi and Site 2/Ban Mae Surin.

13. (C) According to the NGO deputy head, the KNPP is a more closed organization than the Karen National Union, the entity that represents the Karen ethnic group. The KNPP, like the Karen Ni people themselves, tend to keep to themselves. The KNPP reaches out less to, and has less organized interaction with the international community and NGOs. KNPP members do meet with NGOs when requested and are willing to work with NGOs to resolve problems. The head of the KNPP reportedly lives in Site 2/Ban Mae Surin.

14. (C) There is a Karen Ni National Refugee Committee (KNRC) which is responsible for Karen Ni refugees in the two camps in Thailand. According to the NGO deputy head, the KNPP exerts significant influence over the KNRC, though it may not be involved in day-to-day administration of the camps. This administration is carried out by a Karen Ni camp committee in cooperation with a Thai camp commander and the international NGOs that provide food, housing, health, education, and sanitation services. The NGOs typically have a mix of expatriate and Karen Ni staff. Thai security officials are responsible for providing security around the perimeters of the camps.

15. (C) The KNPP has lost control of territory and resources over time because of defeats by the Burmese Army. As a result, according to the NGO deputy head, the KNPP sometimes exerts pressure on the camp committees to provide food and other basic living items. UNHCR reported that some refugees in the camps have complained that the KNPP imposes taxation and forced labor, including in dangerous areas across the

border in Burma. Those with minority ethnicity or who have opposed the KNPP are reportedly singled out.

¶ 6. (C) The camp committees have traditionally been responsible for security and the administration of justice in the Karen camps. UNHCR officials stated that the camp justice system applies some procedures, penalties, and remedies that are not in conformity with Thai law nor international human rights standards and can be politicized and lack impartiality given the KNPP's significant influence with the camp committees. For example, persons can be detained and interrogated without due process and persons of authority in the camp committees have not been punished for crimes they have committed.

¶ 7. (C) UNHCR officials stated that they have received reports of nine executions or disappearances over the past 5 years carried out by the KNPP. These persons were apparently suspected of being spies or traitors. All were ethnic Burman. UNHCR reports that the families of these persons were pressured not to report to the police or UNHCR. The NGO deputy head also said that some executions have occurred but did not provide a number. UNHCR believes these types of activities are intimidating to other refugees in the camps.

¶ 8. (C) The NGO head said that no Karen military training is carried out in the camps. The camps are not used for weapons storage or as military command centers. The Karen Army apparently has military bases in other locations. Some of the families of soldiers live in the camps, which are porous, and soldiers come and go and can also live with their families for extended periods. NGOs and UNHCR do not see armed soldiers in the camps.

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¶ 9. (C) The NGO head said that the Karen camp committees do not engage in conscription of soldiers. Some camp members likely volunteer to join the Karen Army, although some may be under the age of eighteen and thus considered child soldiers. UNHCR reports that some persons under the age of eighteen go from the refugee camps across the border to training camps run by the KNPP. Students at boarding houses in the camps run or sponsored by the KNPP are reportedly required after they finish their studies to repay the support by serving in the army or possibly working in a civilian role with the KNPP.

¶ 10. (C) This message was coordinated with Embassy Rangoon and Consulate General Chiang Mai.  
BOYCE